

SPECIFICATION

ADJUSTABLE MEASURING SCOOP

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention generally relates to the field of measuring devices, and more particularly to a measuring scoop that can be adjusted to measure various specific amounts of materials such as cooking ingredients.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Adjustable measuring devices exist, but with one or more drawbacks. U.S. Patent No. 5,678,450 to Robbins et al. discloses an adjustable measurement container in which the size of the scoop is adjusted by linearly sliding a sliding member that includes a covering portion (unnumbered) and a partition (dam 42). U.S. Patent No. 6,125,699 to Molenaar discloses an adjustable measuring spoon in which the size of the scoop is adjusted by rotating a pivoting member that also includes a covering portion (gate 23) and a partition (49). Use and/or cleaning of the Robbins (e.g., col. 3, lines 28-31 and col. 4, lines 47-50) and Molenaar (e.g., col. 3, lines 40-45 and col. 4, lines 27-29) devices is made less convenient by their inclusion of the covering portions, which are evidently needed to inhibit spillage of material being scooped into the region of the spoon or scoop that is unused when a size other than maximum is selected. Additionally, adjustment of both devices requires a relatively long manual motion to move from the

minimum to maximum positions. Further, the front of the Molenaar measuring spoon is not symmetric since the pivoting member follows a curved path that is orthogonal to the general intended direction of scooping.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0003] The present invention is directed to an adjustable measuring scoop that may address one or more of the foregoing and/or other prior art shortcomings. An adjustable measuring scoop according to the present invention includes a movable partition that adjustably rotates on a rotating means such as an axle so as to result in a scoop size that can be selectively determined between a maximum and a minimum by ready manual manipulation of the scoop by a user. In one aspect of the invention, the movable partition and rotating means are preferably configured so that the movable partition moves toward and away from the scoop's opening, permitting, inter alia, a symmetric frontal contour that may be more effective in scooping an ingredient, for example, from the bottom region of a container. In another optional separate aspect of the invention, adjustment of the movable partition is effected by operation of means including a manual slide that has a range of motion that is linear rather than arcuate, so as to permit more convenient manual adjustment. In yet another separate optional aspect of the invention, adjustment of the movable partition is effected by

operation of means including a lever having a range of motion that is short relative to the resulting movement of the movable partition, so as to permit more convenient manual adjustment. In still another separate optional aspect of the invention, the movable partition may be effectively implemented without the need for an accompanying covering portion, permitting a design in which scooping with and/or cleaning of the device may be cleaner and/or easier.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is an exploded top perspective view of the adjustable measuring scoop of an embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 2 is an exploded bottom perspective view corresponding to **FIG. 1**;

FIG. 3 is a top perspective view of the adjustable measuring scoop of **FIG. 1** showing the movable partition in a first open position;

FIG. 4 is a bottom perspective view corresponding to **FIG. 3**;

FIG. 5 is a top perspective view similar to **FIG. 3** but showing the movable partition in a second open position; and,

FIG. 6 is a bottom perspective view corresponding to **FIG. 5**.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF A PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0004] A preferred embodiment of an adjustable measuring scoop 1 according to the invention is shown in **FIGS. 1-6**. Scoop 1 is a utensil preferably used for measurement of quantities of materials such as cooking ingredients or any other suitable items. The

capacity of scoop 1 is adjustable to allow measurement of a range of quantities of materials. Scoop 1 is preferably made predominantly of molded plastic although other materials such as metal or aluminum can be used.

[0005] Scoop 1 generally comprises a bucket 2, an ergonomically shaped handle 9, and a movable partition 21. The walls of the bucket 2 comprise a front/bottom portion 4 and side portions 6, with pedestals 3 provided at the bottom of front/bottom portion 4 to permit the scoop to be rested on a suitable flat surface. The handle 9 also includes a finger rest 7 provided with two guide slots 5, and the movable partition 21 includes a lip 13 along its perimeter that snugly contacts the interior of the walls of bucket 2.

[0006] The movable partition 21 is rotatably connected to a handle insert 32 on an axle 22 (preferably made of a suitable metal) within partition axle boxes 18 and a body axle box 30 (which fits within the space 19 between the partition axle boxes). The handle insert 32 also includes mating extensions 34 to snugly secure it within the handle 9 of the scoop's body; the handle insert 32 is preferably also glued or otherwise permanently secured in place during assembly. A slide 26 is linearly slidingly secured between handle insert 32 and the body of the handle 9 of scoop 1, and is restricted to a linear path by the following elements: on its top, by top supports 36 formed in the handle insert 32; on its bottom

by bottom supports 8; and, laterally, by side supports 35 within which the slide 26 is laterally confined.

[0007] The slide 26 slides in response to a force applied forward or backward by a user's finger (preferably thumb) on the portion of trigger 25 protruding through aperture 33. Forward movement of the slide 26 forces the slide "T" 24 against the rear of the movable partition 21, causing the partition 21 to swing upwardly toward the opening of the bucket 2 of the scoop 1. Conversely, backward movement of the slide 26 pulls the slide "T" 24 against guides 37, causing the partition 21 to swing downwardly away from the opening of the bucket 2. These movements are also facilitated by bushings 12 fitted on the ends of the slide "T" 24 (which may include a metal component for durability) and run within the guides 37. To facilitate temporary securing of a desired position for the movable partition 21 within the bucket 2, the slide 26 is provided with locking extensions 27 having ribs 28 that mate with corresponding locking grooves 38 formed into the handle insert 32. The locking grooves 38 preferably include a number of positions associated with specific corresponding adjusted sizes of bucket 2, and are dimensioned and configured together with the locking extensions 27 and ribs 28 to permit ribs 28 to engage any of the locking grooves 38 securely enough to permit handling and transportation of the scoop 1 (without inadvertent movement of the movable partition 21) while a load of material is in bucket 2

without the need for constant manual securing of any parts, while still permitting the ribs 28 to pass between the locking grooves 38 upon application of a reasonable manual force on the trigger 25. As will be readily apparent to one of ordinary skill in the art, the handle insert 32 may also have reference indicia (not shown) aligned with the trigger 25 in conjunction with which the selected size of the bucket 2 is visually indicated to the user. The bucket 2 may also have reference indicia (not shown).

[0008] As shown in the sequence of Figs. 3-4 and 5-6, manual adjustment of the trigger 25 back and forth causes the movable partition 21 to rotate back and forth on axle 22, with its lip 13 snugly sliding along the complementary interior surface of the fixed walls of the bucket 2. The curvature of the walls' front/bottom portion 4 is substantially defined by a portion of a cylinder of rotation about the axle 22, such that the partition 21 can swing along the interior of the bucket 2 with a snug sliding fit that prevents material being measured from moving past the partition 21 and entering the unused space on the side of the partition 21 opposite the opening of the bucket 2. To facilitate a reliable snug sliding fit, the scoop 1 is preferably made of a durable and high strength plastic that will not deform under normal operating temperatures and conditions, such as injection molded polycarbonate or ABS plastic. Alternately, it could be

formed substantially of stainless steel, or chrome-plated die-cast zinc.

[0009] A preferred embodiment of an adjustable measuring scoop has thus been disclosed. It will be apparent, however, that various changes may be made in the form, construction, and arrangement of the parts without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention, the form hereinbefore described being merely a preferred or exemplary embodiment thereof. Therefore, the invention is not to be restricted or limited except in accordance with the following claims.